STANDARDIZED EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

APPROVED COURSE OF INSTRUCTION

FIELD COURSE

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

MODULE 3
I-200

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ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

2003

PARTICIPANT REFERENCE MANUAL

Table of Contents

Subjects covered in this module include:

- Terminology

- Organizational Structure

- How the organization initially develops at an incident

- How the organization expands and/or contracts

- Transfer of command

Objectives:

1. Explain how the incident organization expands or contracts to meet operational needs of the incident or event.

2. Describe the use of Branches, Divisions, and Groups within the Operations Section, and provide supervisory titles associated with each level.

3. List the essential elements of information involved in transfer of command.

4. Match organizational positions with appropriate ICS sections.

5. Describe the use and advantages of the ICS Briefing Form (ICS 201).

6. Describe Operational Periods and how they are used.

7. Describe an ICS organization appropriate to a small incident using an Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201).

I. Introduction

The ICS organization is functional, modular and flexible. One way to view it is like a template. Within each of the major functional areas, there are several sub-levels that can be used or expanded as necessary. The flexibility comes in because any position can be filled without the necessity of filling all positions above it.

II. Organizational Terminology

The use of position titles in ICS serves three important purposes:

1. Titles provide a common standard for multi-agency use at an incident. For example, if one agency uses the title Branch Chief, another Branch Manager, another Branch Officer, etc., this can cause confusion and reflect the lack of standardization on the scene.

2. The use of distinctive titles for ICS positions allows for filling ICS positions with the most qualified individuals independent of their rank within their own organization.

3. The lack of standardization of position titles can also confuse the ordering process when requesting qualified personnel. For example, in ordering additional personnel to fill unit positions, it is important for proper communications between the incident and the agency dispatch facilities to know if they will be Unit Leaders, Unit Officers, supervisors, etc.

The use of standard organizational terminology allows for utilization as desired of other agency personnel in designated positions. This provides for a high level of interagency coordination throughout the system.

III. Establishing the ICS Organization

The management of any incident or an event always includes five major functions. One person (the Incident Commander) can be responsible for all functions, or they can each be represented by a major section of the ICS organization. The functions are:

- Command
- Operations
- Planning/Intelligence
- Logistics
- Finance/Administration

On any incident, large or small, the Incident Commander has ultimate responsibility for the effective and safe execution of each of these five functions.

On small incidents, the Incident Commander may perform all functions. On large incidents the Incident Commander may delegate the <u>authority</u> for managing certain functions.

We will briefly cover each of the major functions and review their application within the ICS organizational framework.

A. Incident Command

Incident Command has overall responsibility for the management of incident activity. Even if other functions are not filled, an Incident Commander will always be designated.

The Incident Command function may be carried out in two ways:

1. Single Command

2. Unified Command

In this module, we will cover Single Command, which is the most common application.

Unified Command, which is a management method to use for multi-jurisdictional and/or multi-agency events, is a major feature of ICS and will be discussed as part of Module 13.

Usually, the person in charge of the first arriving units at the scene of an incident assumes the Incident Commander role. That person will remain in charge until formally relieved, or until transfer of command is accomplished.

NOTE: Single unit and personnel radio identification calls may continue to be used until a formal incident has been declared and named. This will be done by agency policy.

ICS position titles will be used instead of agency radio call signs when referring to ICS organizational positions. Agency policy will determine when this is done.

Agencies vary on how and when they make the transition from agency radio designators to ICS position terminology, and there is no hard and fast rule.

Once the incident is formally designated, ICS terminology is always used for:

- Organizational elements - e.g., Division, Branch, Unit, etc.

- Position titles - e.g., Officer, Director, Leader, etc.

- Facilities - e.g., Incident Command Post, Staging Area, etc.

- Resources - e.g., Task Forces, Strike Teams, Squads, Mobile Field Forces, etc.

Upon arriving at an incident, higher ranking personnel will either assume command, maintain command as is, or reassign command to a third party.

In some situations or agencies, lower ranking but more qualified persons (for that incident) may be designated as the Incident Commander.

The Incident Commander will perform the major ICS organizational functions of Operations, Planning/Intelligence, Logistics, and Finance/Administration until determining that the authority for one or more of these functions should be delegated.

The Incident Commander will also perform the Command Staff functions of Information, Safety and Liaison until determining that one or more of these functions should be delegated.

The Incident Commander may have one or more Deputy IC's. The only ICS requirement regarding the use of deputies, whether at the Incident Commander, Section, or Branch level, is that the deputy must be <u>qualified</u> to assume the position.

There are three primary reasons to designate a Deputy Incident Commander:

1. To perform specific tasks as requested by the Incident Commander.

2. To perform the incident command function in a relief capacity, e.g., to take over the next operational period. (In this case the Deputy Incident Commander will assume the primary role.)

3. To represent an assisting agency that may share jurisdiction or have jurisdiction in the future.

B. Command Staff

Three other important staff functions are the responsibility of the Incident Commander:

- Information
- Safety
- Liaison

These responsibilities will be performed by the Incident Commander unless the responsibility is delegated to one of the following people.

1. Information Officer

The Information Officer is the central point for dissemination of information to the news media and other agencies and organizations.

Only one Information Officer will be named to an incident, including those incidents which are multi-jurisdictional. The Information Officer may have assistants as necessary, and the assistants may also represent other agencies or jurisdictions.

2. Safety Officer

The Safety Officer function is to assess hazardous and unsafe situations, and develop measures for assuring personnel safety.

The Safety Officer may exercise emergency authority to directly stop unsafe acts if personnel are in imminent, life-threatening danger.

Only one Safety Officer will be named to an incident. The Safety Officer may have assistants as necessary, and the assistants may represent other agencies or jurisdictions.

3. Liaison Officer

The Liaison Officer is the point of contact at the incident for personnel from assisting or cooperating agencies. There is only one Liaison Officer on any incident. Very large incidents may require the use of assistants.

- Agency Representatives

  An agency or jurisdiction will often send tactical resources to assist at an incident. In ICS these are called <u>assisting agencies</u>.

  These outside agencies may also send an Agency Representative to work with the incident management team to coordinate between agencies or jurisdictional considerations.

  Agency Representatives report to the Liaison Officer. Other agencies such as volunteer organizations or utilities may also be involved in the incident, and are called <u>cooperating agencies</u>. Their Agency Representatives would also report to the Liaison Officer.

4. Assistant

A level of technical capability, qualifications, and responsibility subordinate to primary positions.

Assistants are used as subordinates for the Command Staff positions, particularly Information Officer and Safety Officer. Assistants may also be used at camps to supervise unit activities.

C. General Staff

1. Operations Section

The Operations Section is responsible for the direction and coordination of all incident tactical operations. This is done under the direction of the Operations Section Chief.

Operations at an incident or event can be set up in a variety of ways depending upon:

- The kind of incident
- Agencies involved
- Objectives and strategies selected.

The Operations Section will expand or contract based upon the existing and projected needs of the incident.

Initially, the Operations Section usually consists of those few resources first assigned to an incident. (These resources will initially report directly to the Incident Commander).

As additional resources are committed and the incident becomes more complex, an Operations Section may be established.

The Operations Section develops from the bottom up by first establishing Divisions, Groups, and if necessary, Branches. Also, the Operations Section may have Staging Areas and, in some cases, an air organization.

We will briefly examine a number of combinations for the use of Divisions, Groups, and Branches, and discuss four methods of expanding/organizing the Operations Section.

a. Geographic Divisions

    A common method of organizing tactical operations at an incident is for the Incident Commander to first establish two or more divisions. Divisions always refer to geographically defined areas, e.g., the area around a stadium, the inside or floors of a building, or an open area.

    Initially, establishing divisions may be done for purposes of "defining the incident," and may or may not include the designation of separate Division Supervisors.

    When the resources assigned within a division exceed, or will soon exceed, the recommended span of control guidelines of one to five, Division Supervisors should be designated.

    Divisions not under the direct management of the Incident Commander or Operations Section Chief are managed by Division Supervisors.

b. Functional Groups

    Another common method of organizing operations at an incident is to establish functional groups. As the name implies, this form of organization deals not with geographic areas, but with functional activity.

    Examples of functional groups include medical groups, search and rescue groups, perimeter security groups, maritime salvage groups, etc.

    Groups, like divisions, are managed by Supervisors.

c. Combined Divisions and Groups

    A third method is the use of combined geographic divisions and functional groups.

This approach is commonly used when a functional activity operates across divisional lines. For example, a specialized Canine Search Group would be used wherever required and moved as needed on an earthquake incident which has been divided into geographic divisions.

In any organization in which combined divisions and groups are used, it is important that the supervisors establish and maintain close communications and coordination. Each will have equal authority; neither supervisor will be subordinate to the other.

d. Branches

A fourth method of an Operations Section organization is to establish a branch structure. Branches may be geographic, functional or jurisdictional.

On large incidents involving fires, floods, earthquakes etc., it may be desirable to divide the affected area into geographic branches. These often follow topographic features such as rivers, hills or along major arterials etc.

On developing incidents, geographic branches are established because of span of control considerations, i.e., when there are more divisions than can be effectively managed. Geographic branches may also be established by political boundaries.

Functional branches may be established at an incident to manage various operations functions, e.g., medical branch, search branch, fire branch etc. Functional branches can be used in combination with geographic or jurisdictional branches.

Jurisdictional branches are set up in some cases when multi-agency or multi-disciplines are involved at an incident. For example a City agency branch, County agency branch, State agency branch etc. In this case, each agency has a specific jurisdictional function to perform that is best incorporated into the Operations Section versus inclusion at the Command level. Jurisdictional management of the incident is best accomplished by using Unified Command.

In addition to the Operations Section positions discussed so far, there are two other important organizational elements that should be covered:

- Staging Areas

  Staging Areas are locations set up at an incident where resources can be placed while awaiting a tactical assignment.

  Once a Staging Area has been designated and named, a Staging Area Manager will be assigned. The Staging Area Manager will report to the Operations Section Chief or to the Incident Commander if the Operations Section Chief has not been designated.

In some disciplines the Staging Area function is located in the Logistics Section. In these instances the Staging Area Manager reports to the Logistics Section Chief.

All resources assigned to a Staging Area are on an "available" status and should be ready for immediate departure from the staging area (within 3 minutes). Staging Areas should not be used to locate out-of-service resources or for other logistics functions.

Staging Areas can be set up for specific resources. For example Staging Areas for ambulances, fire, police, utilities etc.

In some applications, branches may have separate staging areas. For example, a medical branch may have an ambulance staging area assigned to the branch.

Staging Areas may be physically relocated as necessary.

- Air Operations Branch

Some kinds of incidents will make use of air resources to provide tactical or logistical support. On smaller incidents, tactical aviation resources will be limited in number and will report as single resources directly to the Incident Commander or to the Operations Section Chief if that position has been established.

On larger incidents requiring both tactical and logistical air support, it may be desirable to activate a separate Air Operations organization. The Air Operations organization will be established at the Branch level, reporting directly to the Operations Section Chief.

The Air Operations Branch Director can establish two functional groups. The Air Tactical Group coordinates all airborne activity. The Air Support Group provides all incident ground based support to aviation resources.

2. Planning/Intelligence Section

The Planning/Intelligence Section is responsible for the collection and evaluation of incident situation information, preparing situation status reports, displaying situation information, maintaining status of resources, developing an Incident Action Plan, and preparing required incident related documentation. This is done under the direction of the Planning/Intelligence Section Chief. A Deputy Planning/Intelligence Section Chief may be assigned as required.

The Planning/Intelligence Section, if established by the Incident Commander, will have responsibility for several important functions:

- Maintaining resource status.

- Maintaining and displaying situation status.

- Preparing the Incident Action Plan.

- Providing an initial location for technical specialists assigned to an incident.

- Providing documentation services.

- Preparing the Demobilization Plan.

Technical specialists are advisors with special skills required at the incident. Technical specialists will initially report to the Planning/Intelligence Section, work within that section, or be reassigned to another part of the organization. Technical specialists can be in any discipline required, e.g., aviation, environment, hazardous materials, etc.

One of the most important functions of the Planning/Intelligence Section is to look beyond the current and next operational period, and anticipate potential problems or events.

The Planning/Intelligence Section is commonly organized into four unit-level positions.

a. Resources Unit - Responsible for all check-in activity, and for maintaining the status on all personnel and equipment resources assigned to the incident.

b. Situation Unit - Collects and processes information on the current situation, prepares situation displays and situation summaries, develops maps and projections.

c. Documentation Unit - Prepares the Incident Action Plan, maintains all incident-related documentation, and provides duplication services.

d. Demobilization Unit - On large, complex incidents, the Demobilization Unit will assist in ensuring that an orderly, safe, and cost-effective movement of personnel will be made when they are no longer required at the incident.

Other units may be established in Planning/Intelligence as necessary. The decision to add a unit is based on the need for specific information that may not be found in other Planning/Intelligence units. For example an Advance Planning Unit, Fire Behavior Unit or a Toxics Assessment Unit.

3. Logistics Section

Units in the Logistics Section are responsible for providing services and support to meet all incident or event needs. This is accomplished under the direction of the Logistics Section Chief. A Deputy Logistics Section Chief may be assigned.

Logistics service and support to an incident or event are important functions. Early recognition of the need for a separate logistics function and section can reduce time and money spent on an incident.

The Logistics Section Chief has the responsibility for a number of important activities at an incident. These may include:

- Facilities
- Services
- Personnel
- Equipment
- Materials

NOTE: It is important to remember that logistics unit functions, except for the Supply Unit, are geared to supporting personnel and resources <u>directly assigned to the incident</u>.

On large incidents when all six Logistics Section units are activated, or where there are many facilities and large amounts of equipment, it may be desirable, or necessary, to establish a two-branch structure. This will reduce the span of control for the Logistics Section Chief.

The two branches would be called Service Branch and Support Branch and have the following responsibilities:

a. Service Branch

Communications Unit - Develop the Communications Plan, distribute and maintain all forms of communications equipment, and manage the Incident Communications Center if established.

Medical Unit - Develop the Medical Plan, and provide first-aid and light medical treatment for personnel assigned to the incident. This unit also develops the emergency medical transportation plan (ground and/or air) and prepares medical reports.

Food Unit - Responsible for determining and supplying the feeding and potable water requirements at all incident facilities, and for active resources within the Operations Section. The unit may prepare menus and food, provide them through catering services, or use some combination of both methods.

b. Support Branch

Supply Unit - Orders personnel, equipment, and supplies. The unit stores and maintains supplies, and services non-expendable equipment. <u>In ICS, all resource orders are placed through the Logistics Section's Supply Unit</u>. If the Supply Unit has not been established, the responsibility for ordering rests with the Logistics Section Chief.

Facilities Unit - Sets up and maintains whatever facilities may be required in support of the incident. Provides managers for the Incident Base and camps. Also provides security support for the facilities and incident as required.

Ground Support Unit - Provides transportation, and maintains and fuels vehicles assigned to the incident.

c. Other Logistics Functions

The six logistics units identified in the ICS will serve most incident needs. However, like Planning/Intelligence there may be additional functions which would require the establishment of separate units. For example, on some incidents Volunteer Coordination may require a separate logistics unit to register, process and coordinate volunteers.

On law enforcement incidents, or multi-agency incidents that require considerable law enforcement personnel, it may be necessary to establish a personnel function in the Logistics Section to support this activity. On smaller incidents, this function could be met by establishing a Personnel Unit within the Support Branch. If the incident grows beyond unit level support, (usually one to seven people), a separate Personnel Branch may be established. The Personnel Branch could be divided into units as necessary to handle additional functions.

4. Finance/Administration Section

The Finance/Administration Section is responsible for monitoring incident-related costs, and administering any necessary procurement contracts.

The Finance/Administration Section may not be activated on all incidents. The Incident Commander will retain responsibility for all finance-related activities until Finance/ Administration units or the section has been activated.

There are four units which may be established in the Finance/Administration Section. These are:

a. Time Unit - Ensures that all personnel time on an incident or event is recorded.

b. Procurement Unit - Processes administrative paperwork associated with equipment rental and supply contracts. Responsible for equipment time reporting.

c. Compensation/Claims Unit - This unit combines two important functions.

Compensation is responsible for seeing that all documentation related to workers compensation is correctly completed. Also, Compensation maintains files of injuries and/or illnesses associated with the incident.

Claims handles investigation of all claims involving damaged property associated with or involved in the incident.

d. Cost Unit - Responsible for collecting all cost information, and for providing cost estimates for various strategies and cost savings recommendations.

IV. Developing the Organization

ICS is based on a requirement that the system must be capable of handling both small and large incidents.

In other words, ICS must be able to easily expand from very small, routine operations into a larger organization capable of handling a maximum size event. It must also be capable of selective and total demobilizing or downsizing in an efficient manner.

There are no hard and fast rules for when or how to expand the ICS organization. Many incidents will never require the activation of Planning/Intelligence, Logistics, or Finance/Administration Sections, while others will require some or all of them to be established.

The following are general guidelines that will be useful in developing the ICS organization:

A. Establishing an Incident Command Post

Designate an Incident Command Post and make its location known to all incident resources.

As an incident grows, the Incident Command Post may also expand in size. Therefore, the location selected should be capable of accommodating additional personnel.

The Incident Command Post may be a vehicle, trailer, fixed facility or any location suitable to accommodate the function. Normally, the Incident Command Post will not be moved once established.

B. Developing the Initial Organization

If the incident is growing in size or complexity, and/or reaching or exceeding span of control limits, it is important to rapidly establish the organizational framework necessary to manage it. This usually means filling essential General and Command staff positions first, although unit level positions may be filled whenever required.

It is better to overestimate the need for a larger organization than to underestimate it, as it is always possible to downsize the organization. Initial organization development on an expanding incident should provide positions to cover at least the following activities:

- Check-in
- Resource tracking
- Logistical support

The experience of the Incident Commander is a key factor in successful incident management. The Incident Commander should be aware when a situation is growing or becoming more complex, and may require more resources. Arrival of the media and Agency Representatives is always a good indication of increasing complexity.

C. Considering Specialized Needs

Dealing directly with the media or support agency representatives can seriously disrupt the Incident Commander's attention to other matters. Assigning a person or persons to fill the Command Staff positions can save the Incident Commander a tremendous amount of time and trouble.

D. Monitoring and Maintaining Good Span of Control

Keep all elements of the organization within the span of control guidelines of between three and seven persons or elements reporting to a supervisor. A ratio of one to five is the model to follow whenever possible. Anticipate a growing incident and, as necessary, plan for span of control for a larger incident.

E. Demobilizing Organizational Elements When No Longer Necessary

Avoid over-organization. If it is clear that a particular function is no longer required it is perfectly appropriate to demobilize the unit, and to reassign or release the personnel.

This is one of the features of ICS that keeps the organization size proportionate to the need and also reduces cost.

Anytime an ICS position is demobilized, the function it was performing goes to the next higher level in the chain of command.

F. Avoiding Combining ICS Organizational Positions

One person may be assigned more than one function on the incident organization chart.

However, functional positions should not be combined within the organization. This could create personnel reassignment problems and confusion later if units that were merged need to be separated.

For example, do not combine Logistics and Planning/Intelligence activities in one box on the organizational chart. This can be confusing to both on- and off-incident personnel. Also, as the incident grows, it will be more difficult later to split the positions than it will be to assign a second person to manage one of the functions.

V.   Transfer of Incident Command

One of the main features of ICS is the ability to transfer command with minimum disruption.

Transfer of incident command may take place when a senior person arrives at the scene and elects or has been designated by higher authority to assume the position of Incident Commander. This is often associated with a growing incident.

Transfer of incident command can also take place in reverse, i.e., transferring command to a less senior or less qualified person in an incident which is under control or moving toward demobilization.

Transfers may also be needed for personnel assigned to assume command for new operational periods.

Transfer of incident command could also take place in certain situations when a lower ranking, but more qualified person, would be the best selection because of the unique circumstances associated with the incident.

The decision to transfer command is based on complexity of the incident and qualifications, and experience of available personnel.

Every agency should have a checklist to follow for transfer of command. All checklists should include at least the following:

- Appropriate ICS terminology is being used at the incident.

- An Incident Command Post has been established.

- Transfer of command will take place face-to-face if possible.

- Outgoing Incident Commander to prepare and give a briefing.

- The new Incident Commander formally accepts command.

- Appropriate notifications are made to incident personnel and appropriate non-incident locations.

The transfer of incident command should include the following:

- Situation status

- Objectives and priorities

- Current organization

- Resource assignments

- Resources enroute and/or ordered

- Facilities established

- Communications Plan

- Prognosis, concerns, related issues.

VI.   Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201)

A good tool for collecting incident related information is the Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201). The Incident Briefing Form (ICS 201) is a four page form used by the initial Incident Commander. The form is divided into several sections:

- Map (as needed)
- Current objectives
- Current actions
- Current organization
- Resources summary

This form can capture basic information about the incident. It can be used as the initial incident action plan, and for transfer of command briefings.

VII.   Operational Periods

The Operational Period is the length of time it should take to accomplish the tactical objectives. Incident action planning is based around the use of operational periods.

When ICS was originally developed, the Operational Period was developed to get away from the use of day/night, or shift changes for defining when work should be accomplished on multi-agency incidents. Often agencies changed shifts at different times, so the use of the Operational Period as the time frame of reference keeps the focus on the incident.

The Operational Period should not be confused with shift change or 12 hour increments. At the beginning of an incident the Operational Period may be only a few hours. As the incident expands and extends into days, the Operational Period may be 12 hours or more. Operational Periods should not be more than 24 hours.